



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 20423

EO-302

Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis and Administration

March 1, 2006

COL Paul Curtis
Director for Logistics
Alaska Command
ALCOM/J4
9480 Pease Ave. Suite 216
Elmendorf AFB, AK 99506-2100

RE: STB Finance Docket No. 34658, Alaska Railroad Corporation's Proposed
Northern Rail Extension Project

Dear Colonel Curtis:

This letter follows-up on the December 9, 2005 meeting between members of the Alaska Command (ALCOM) staff, Dave Navecky of my staff and members of the Board's independent third-party contractor team (ICF Consulting) regarding the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Northern Rail Extension (NRE) Project. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how best to work with ALCOM as a cooperating agency and how the proposed NRE Project could affect the military and their use of training areas in the project area.

Our purpose in sending this letter is to request information on (1) current ALCOM plans for training activities at the Tanana Flats Training Area (TFTA) and Donnelly Training Area (DTA) and (2) changes, if any, to the type, location, frequency, or duration of training activities if the proposed NRE Project is constructed and operated. Your responses to the following questions would assist us in the preparation of the EIS. More specifically, the information would help us differentiate between training activities that would occur under the No Action Alternative (i.e., the NRE Project would not be constructed or operated) and the Proposed Action (i.e., the NRE Project would be constructed and operated). In your responses, please provide information separately for DTA East and DTA West.

1. What are the current and projected (five years) training loads for DTA and TFTA (five years is the Integrated Training Area Management [ITAM] planning horizon)?
 - a. What level of training activity is currently planned, e.g., number of training days, number and size of units, and maneuver impact miles (after completion of the

Battle Area Complex and the Combined Area Collective Training Facility at DTA)?

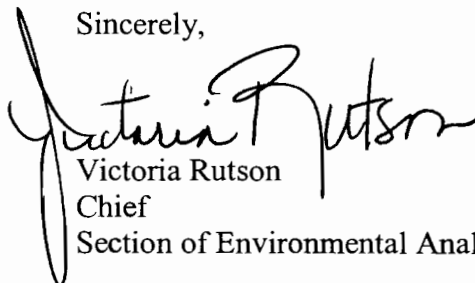
- b. Will recent BRAC or other decisions about troop levels in Alaska affect currently planned training? If so, what will change?
 - c. Do U.S. Army Alaska's (USARAK's) current training plans include training Stryker Brigade Combat Team units based outside Alaska at DTA or TFTA?
 - d. Past EISs have indicated that there are 242 training days available at DTA. How are these days scheduled and used: when do units go to DTA and what are the constraints?
- 2. Maps in the Draft EIS for Transformation of U.S. Army Alaska indicate that TFTA and DTA West are virtually 100 percent "no go" for Stryker vehicles in the summer. Is the "no go" designation due to natural conditions (e.g., wetlands) or lack of access across the river in the summer?
 - 3. If the proposed rail line extension is not constructed, would USARAK build a road bridge over the Tanana River to provide more reliable access or expand access to TFTA and DTA West?
 - 4. Would a Tanana River bridge (either road or railroad) at Flag Hill or another location change training schedules or destinations for units or schedules for training areas? If so, what would change?
 - 5. If the proposed rail line extension is constructed, would the military expect to use the rail line to access the TFTA and DTA West training areas? If so, where would USARAK want spurs or sidings located?
 - 6. If the proposed rail line extension is constructed and if USARAK would expect to change training activities as a result:
 - a. what types of information would USARAK be able to provide to aid in evaluating the potential impacts?
 - b. would implementation of the ITAM or other measures limit the potential impacts?

If answers to any of these questions are available in documents such as the Fort Wainwright Installation Range Development Plan, the Live Fire Training Investment Strategy, and the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan for Fort Wainwright, we would appreciate receiving copies of these documents.

Your response by the end of March would be greatly appreciated. Please let me know if you anticipate the need for additional time to respond to our request or if any the requested information or documents are sensitive in nature. In addition to Dave Navecky of my staff, we would appreciate if you could also provide a copy of your response to Mr. Alan Summerville of ICF Consulting, our independent third-party contractor at 9300 Lee Highway, Fairfax, Virginia, 22031.

Thank you for your assistance. Please feel free to contact me or Dave Navecky at 202-565-1593 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Victoria Rutson
Chief
Section of Environmental Analysis